



April 2, 2018

State Board of Education Members  
Indiana State Board of Education  
143 West Market Street, Suite 500  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear State Board of Education Members,

The purpose of this letter is to support Bartholomew Consolidated School Corporation's (BCSC) application for their New Tech High School to be approved as another Locally Created Pathway for demonstrating college readiness competence by the State Board of Education. This program, along with the BCSC senior projects, clearly provide evidence that our graduates have the habits of mind to be successful in their post-secondary pursuits as well as their career aspirations.

BCSC was the first school district in the United States to pursue the strategy of project-based learning across the entire Kindergarten through 12th Grade continuum. Its purpose then was much the same as it is today: improve teaching and curriculum by making school more relevant and engaging and by enhancing the connection between school and the world.

Through New Tech's robust instructional design, based on rigorous research and recommendations from the National Commission on the High School Senior Year, the academic program extends beyond the school campus to take advantage of learning opportunities outside the four walls of the building and beyond the traditional school day.

At the time of CSA's formation, I served as the President of the Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce. The establishment of New Tech was critical to the business community's strategic development efforts, as we viewed project-based learning to be perfectly aligned with our community's economic strengths in engineering and technology—both team-based, project-centered careers.

Each of New Tech's student projects engages significant community stakeholders from the public, private, and social sectors. Collectively, these community leaders and organizations provide real-world case studies and frame complex social problems within the community that are designed to be addressed by students using the principles and practices of project-based learning, supported by an underlying philosophy of Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

New Tech instills soft and interpersonal skills within students, supported by strong communication and leadership abilities. The school's core values of trust, respect, and responsibility create a learning culture that models both leadership and professionalism in a manner highly regarded by both employers and the community-at-large.

In addition to my current role with the Community Education Coalition in Columbus, Indiana, I am also the father of two sons, both of which have attended and thrived as students at New Tech. My youngest son, Parker, recently returned from a trip to New Orleans as part of a school project designed to help the city continue its community and economic development efforts from the devastating effects of

Hurricane Katrina, as well as study the impact of climate change on both wildlife and residents of the city. My oldest son, Shafer, now attends Purdue as a computer science major, a degree that New Tech perfectly prepared him to undertake. During his tenure at New Tech, he completed numerous community-oriented projects addressing issues such as recycling, transportation, economic inequality, the built environment, and practical science-related projects.

From my perspective as a past leader within the business sector, as a current steward of the learning system, and as a proud parent of New Tech students, I confidently endorse both the strength and quality of the New Tech High School. The local pathway has been tremendously successful, developing not only the college readiness of students, but also cultivating the necessary hard and soft skills well-aligned with the needs of the community.

For these reasons, I ask that you give BCSC's New Tech High School your highest considerations as a locally-created and supported pathway to help young people learn to use their minds well and prepare them to be successful in the Twenty-First Century.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jack B. Hess". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jack" being more prominent.

Jack B. Hess  
Executive Director  
Community Education Coalition and CivicLab

- critical thinking skills
- 21st Century skills
- standard-based
- student engagement = student success
- student-focused



May 29, 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

Magnify Learning is pleased to support Columbus Signature Academy New Tech as they apply to be a Locally Created Pathway.

CSA New Tech is a National PBL Demonstration Site for Magnify Learning and has been the site of the PBL Academy since 2005. CSA New Tech has educational visitors each year because educators want to see how to create a culture where academic content can be combined with workforce development skills such as oral/written communication, collaboration, and agency.

Magnify Learning is a national Project Based Learning professional development non-profit organization. As the Executive Director, I have seen Magnify Learning evolve from a PBL movement to a growing organization looking to provide sustainable growth for schools. Project Based Learning utilizes authentic real world projects connected to community partners to increase student engagement, so teachers can increase the level of academic rigor.

Magnify Learning recognizes the Project Based Learning work being done at CSA New Tech as a great picture of what is being asked for in boxes 2 and 3 of the Indiana Graduation Pathways. A student outcome report from New Tech Network released in 2017 reports students participating in high quality PBL schools such as CSA New Tech show a college persistence rate of 84% (17% higher than comparison schools) and higher performance on standardized post-secondary exams such as the ACT.

CSA New Tech is uniquely positioned to offer opportunities to its graduates that help them be prepared for post-secondary institutions with rigorous content knowledge and community based experiences that build their workforce development skills. Magnify Learning looks forward to continuing our partnership with CSA New Tech as they provide a robust experience that leads to post-secondary success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ryan C. Steuer".

Ryan Steuer  
Executive Director  
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